

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
MIAMI DIVISION

CASE NO.:

JAMES WATSON

Plaintiff,

v.

RESTAURANT PEOPLE BEACH BLVD., LLC.,
d/b/a S3

Defendant.

COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

Plaintiff, James Watson (“Plaintiff”) hereby sues Defendant, Restaurant People Beach Blvd, LLC., (“Defendant”) doing business as S3, for Injunctive Relief, attorney’s fees, litigation expenses and costs pursuant to Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12181-12189 (“ADA”), 28 C.F.R. Part 36, *et seq.*

1. Venue lies in the Southern District of Florida pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and Local Rule 3.1, in that the original transaction or occurrence giving rise to this cause of action occurred in this District.

2. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 28 U.S.C. § 1343, this Court has been given original jurisdiction over actions which arise from the Defendant’s violations of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.* See also 28 U.S.C. § 2201 and § 2202.

3. Plaintiff is a Florida resident, lives in Miami-Dade County, is *sui juris*, and qualifies as an individual with disabilities as defined by the ADA. Plaintiff is legally blind and a member of a protected class under the ADA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12102(1)-(2), the regulations implementing the ADA set forth at 28 CFR §§ 36.101 *et seq.* and in 42 U.S.C. 3602, §802(h). Plaintiff is substantially

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limited in the major life activity of seeing. Plaintiff's disability is defined in 28 C.F.R. §36.105(b)(2).

4. Plaintiff uses the internet and a mobile device to help him navigate a world of goods, products and services like the sighted. The internet, websites and mobile applications provide him a window into the world that he would not otherwise have. He brings this action against Defendant for offering and maintaining a mobile website (software that is intended to run on mobile devices such as phones or tablet computers) that is not fully accessible and independently usable by visually impaired consumers. Plaintiff utilizes the Apple Screen Reader VoiceOver software to read computer materials and/or access and comprehend internet mobile website information which is specifically designed for the visually impaired.

5. Plaintiff is also an advocate of the rights of similarly situated disabled persons and is a "tester" for the purpose of asserting his civil rights. As such, he monitors mobile websites to ensure and determine whether places of public accommodation and/or their mobile websites are in compliance with the ADA.

6. Defendant, Restaurant People Beach Blvd, LLC., is a Florida limited liability company which owns and operates a place of public accommodation which is restaurant branded as "S3". Defendant's restaurant is located at Hilton Ft. Lauderdale Beach Resort, located at 505 N Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304, and open to the public. As such, it is a Place of Public Accommodation subject to the requirements of Title III of the ADA and its implementing regulation as defined by 42 U.S.C. §12181(7)(B), §12182, and 28 C.F.R. §36.104(2). Defendant's restaurant is also referenced as "place of public accommodation", "S3" or "Restaurant."

7. Defendant is defined as a "Public Accommodation" within meaning of Title III

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because Defendant is a private entity which owns and/or operates “[A] restaurant, bar, or other establishment serving food or drink,” 42 U.S.C. §12181(7)(B) and 28 C.F.R. §36.104(2).

8. Subsequent to the effective date of the ADA, Defendant constructed, or caused to be constructed, the <https://s3restaurant.com> (hereinafter “mobile website”) which is designed for the general public to access on their mobile devices (phones, tablets). This mobile website supports, is an extension of, is in conjunction with, is complementary and supplemental to Defendant, “S3”. The mobile website delineates the goods, services, accommodations, privileges, benefits and facilities available to patrons at “S3” restaurant.

9. The mobile website is offered as a way for the public to become familiar with “S3”, menu selections, hours of operation, restaurant location, and other information Defendant seeks to communicate to the public. The mobile website provides a link to reserve a table for dining within the restaurant, and the ability to purchase a gift card online for exclusive use at the “S3” restaurant. The website also allows the public to obtain information about private events, as well as a request form to contact the restaurant with the details to inquire and book the special/private events. The mobile website provides links to “S3” Facebook and Instagram pages to learn about pop-ups and specials. By the provision of menu selection, reservation services, and inquire about private events online, the mobile website is an integral part of the goods and services offered by Defendant on behalf of “S3” restaurant. By this nexus, the mobile website is characterized as a Place of Public Accommodation subject to Title III of the ADA¹, 42 U.S.C. § 12181(7)(B) and 28 C.F.R. §

¹ Ensuring Web Accessibility for people with disabilities has become a priority for the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice Civil Rights Division has taken the position that both State and local government websites (Title II) and the websites of private entities that are public accommodations (Title III) are covered by the ADA. On March 18, 2022, the DOJ issued guidance on Web Accessibility, see <https://beta.ada.gov/resources/web-guidance/>. The guidance states that individuals with disabilities should not be denied equal access to information, and inaccessible websites are as excluding as are access barriers to physical locations. DOJ guidance requires that

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36.104(2).

10. Defendant's mobile website allows mobile device users to use a mobile platform through a connection to Wi-Fi or cellular data so that users can manage their dining choice from their mobile device. Defendant has subjected itself to the ADA because its mobile website is offered as a tool to promote, advertise and sell products and services of the restaurant. As a result, Defendant's mobile website must interact with the public, which includes Plaintiff (a visually impaired person). Therefore, Defendant's mobile website must comply with the ADA, which means it must not discriminate against individuals with disabilities and may not deny full and equal enjoyment of the goods and services afforded to the general public.²

11. Defendant's mobile website does not properly interact with VoiceOver screen reader software technology in a manner that allows Plaintiff (a visually impaired person) to comprehend the mobile website and does not provide other means of accommodation.

12. Like the seeing community, Plaintiff would like the opportunity to be able to use the <https://s3restaurant.com> mobile website to test whether he can comprehend the "S3" restaurant menu selections or the ability to make reservations at the restaurant location. However, unless Defendant is required to eliminate the barriers to Plaintiff's ability to communicate with Defendant through the mobile website, Plaintiff will continue to deny full and equal access to the mobile website and will be deterred from fully using that mobile website.

13. Plaintiff is continuously aware of the violations on the mobile website, and is aware that it would be a futile gesture to attempt to utilize that mobile website as long as those violations

website barriers must be identified, prevented, and removed so that all Title II and Title III entities offer websites that are accessible to people with disabilities.

² According to Statista, almost half of web traffic in the United States originated from mobile devices in 2021. Therefore, Defendant knew or should have known that potential customers would be using the mobile version of its website and provided accessibility for blind users.

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exist.

14. Plaintiff has no plain, adequate, or complete remedy at law to redress the wrongs alleged herein and this action is his only means to secure adequate redress from Defendant's practice.

15. Notice to Defendant is not required as a result of Defendant's failure to cure the violations. Enforcement of the rights of Plaintiff is right and just pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201, 2202.

16. Plaintiff has been obligated to retain the civil rights law office of J. Courtney Cunningham, PLLC and has agreed to pay a reasonable fee for services in the prosecution of this cause, including costs and expenses incurred. Plaintiff is entitled to recover those attorney's fees, costs and expenses from Defendant pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12205 and 28 CFR § 36.505.

COUNT I – VIOLATIONS OF TITLE III OF THE ADA

17. The ADA requires that Public Accommodations (and Places of Public Accommodation) are required to ensure that communication is effective, which includes the provision of auxiliary aids and services for such purpose.

18. According to 28 C.F.R. Section 36.303(b)(1), auxiliary aids and services includes "voice, text, and video-based telecommunications products and systems." 28 C.F.R. Section 36.303(b)(2) specifically states that (VoiceOver) screen reader software is an effective method of making visually delivered material available to individuals who are blind or have low vision.

19. 28 C.F.R. Section 36.303(c)(1)(ii) specifically states that public accommodations must furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities. "In order to be effective, auxiliary aids and services must be provided in accessible formats, in a timely manner, and in such a way as to protect

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the privacy and independence of the individual with a disability.”

20. Part 36 of Title 28 of the C.F.R. was designed and is implemented to effectuate subtitle A of Title III of the ADA, which requires places of public accommodation to be designed, constructed, and altered in compliance with the accessibility standards established by Part 36.

21. The <https://s3restaurant.com> mobile website has been designed to integrate with the “S3” through the provision of menus selection, the ability to make a reservation and inquire about private events online. Defendant has extended “S3” restaurant into individual persons homes and portable devices wherever located through the mobile website which is a service, facility, privilege, advantage, benefit and accommodation of its restaurant. Because the mobile website is integrated with, and is a nexus to, Defendant’s brick-and-mortar restaurants, it is governed by the following provisions:

a. U.S.C. Section 12182(a) provides: “No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation.”

b. 42 U.S.C. Section 12182(b)(1)(A)(i) provides: “It shall be discriminatory to subject an individual or class of individuals on the basis of a disability or disabilities of such individual or class, directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, to a denial of the opportunity of the individual or class to participate in or benefit from the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of an entity[.]”

c. 42 U.S.C. Section 12182(b)(1)(A)(ii) provides: “It shall be discriminatory to afford an individual or class of individuals, on the basis of a disability or disabilities of such individual or class, directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements with the

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opportunity to participate in or benefit from a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation that is not equal to that afforded to other individuals[.]”

d. 42 U.S.C. Section 12182(b)(1)(A)(ii) provides: “It shall be discriminatory to provide an individual or class of individuals, on the basis of a disability or disabilities of such individual or class, directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements with a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation that is different or separate from that provided to other individuals, unless such action is necessary to provide the individual or class of individuals with a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation, or other opportunity that is as effective as that provided to others[.]”

e. 42 U.S.C. Section 12182(b)(1)(B) provides: “Goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations shall be afforded to an individual with a disability in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the individual.”

f. 42 U.S.C. Section 12182(b)(1)(C) provides: “Notwithstanding the existence of separate or different programs or activities provided in accordance with this section, an individual with a disability shall not be denied the opportunity to participate in such programs or activities that are not separate or different.”

g. 42 U.S.C. Section 12182(b)(2)(ii) describes as discrimination: “a failure to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, when such modifications are necessary to afford such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the entity can demonstrate that making such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations[.]”

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h. 42 U.S.C. Section 12182(b)(2)(iii) describes as discrimination: “a failure to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the entity can demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden[.]”

22. Plaintiff attempted to access and test the mobile website but was unable to do so because the mobile website contains barriers to effective communication for visually impaired individuals such as himself. Plaintiff continues to be unable to effectively communicate with Defendant through the mobile website and understand the content therein because numerous portions of the mobile website do not interface with mobile VoiceOver screen reader software. Specifically, features of the mobile website that are inaccessible to Plaintiff (a VoiceOver screen reader software user) include, but are not limited to, the following (citing the WCAG 2.1 Level A and AA Guidelines):

- i. Guideline 1.1.1. Non-Text Content is violated. Promotional images aren't labeled or announced. For example, the Ladies Night promotional image includes the day of the week and 'free margaritas' but this content isn't announced. Only "screen shot 2022 02 22 at 5 dot 01 dot 17 pm don't png." is announced.
- ii. Guideline 2.4.3. Focus order is violated. Some content doesn't receive focus and isn't announced. For example, on the homepage, the Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner hours are not announced. Focus skips this section and moves directly to the next section of content.
- iii. Guideline 1.4.5 – Images of Text is violated. The menus are only available as images and the content in the images is not announced. For example, the Lunch Menu is announced as "Lunch Print New 2 dot JPG" but none of the content in it is announced. Users had the same experience with all four of the menus, Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and Drinks.
- iv. Guideline 3.3.3 – Error Suggestion is violated. Error suggestions are not specific. For example, after submitting the Event Quote form which has 11 fields, then an error message was displayed next to the Email field, but only 'please fill out this field' was announced. The name of the field wasn't announced and then focus automatically moved to the top of

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the page immediately after this was announced. When users swiped back to the Email field then just the label was announced again. Users didn't hear that it was blank.

23. As the owner and/or operator and/or beneficiary of a mobile website which serves as a gateway to Defendant's "S3" restaurant. Defendant is required to comply with the ADA and the provisions cited above. This includes Defendant's obligation to create, maintain and operate a mobile website that is accessible to Plaintiff so that he (as a visually impaired person) can enjoy full and equal access to the mobile website and the content therein, including the ability comprehend menu selections and make reservations online.

24. Defendant has violated the ADA by failing to interface the mobile website which is directly linked to its restaurant with VoiceOver screen reader software utilized by Plaintiff (a visually impaired individual) (reference violations delineated within paragraph 23) either directly or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements. Defendant's violations have resulted in Defendant denying Plaintiff effective communication on the basis of his disability in accordance with 28 C.F.R. Section 36.303 *et seq.*

a. by depriving Plaintiff of the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of its place of public accommodation (42 U.S.C. § 12182(a));

b. in the denial of providing Plaintiff the opportunity to participate in or benefit from the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations (42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(A)(i));

c. in failing to afford Plaintiff the opportunity to participate in or benefit from a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation that is equal to that afforded to other individuals (42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(A)(ii));

d. by providing Plaintiff a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or

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accommodation that is different or separate from that provided to other individuals (unless such action is necessary to provide the individual or class of individuals with a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation, or other opportunity that is as effective as that provided to others) (42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(A)(iii));

e. by failing to afford Plaintiff goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the disabled individual (42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(B));

f. notwithstanding the existence of separate or different programs or activities provided in accordance with this section, by denying Plaintiff the opportunity to participate in such programs or activities that are not separate or different. (42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(1)(C));

g. by a failure to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, when such modifications are necessary to afford such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations to individuals with disabilities (unless the entity can demonstrate that making such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations) (42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(ii)); and,

h. by a failure to take such steps as necessary to ensure that disabled individuals are not excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services (unless the entity can demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden) (42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(iii)).

25. Plaintiff is continuously aware of the violations within the mobile website and is aware that it would be a futile gesture to attempt to utilize and/or test the mobile website as long

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as those violations exist.

26. As the result of the barriers to communication which are present within the mobile website and by continuing to operate and/or benefit from the mobile website with such barriers, Defendant has contributed to Plaintiff's frustration, humiliation, sense of isolation and segregation and has deprived Plaintiff the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges and/or accommodations available to the general public. By encountering the barriers to effective communication within the mobile website and knowing that it would be a futile gesture to attempt to utilize the mobile website, Plaintiff has been deprived of the meaningful choice of freely visiting and utilizing the same accommodations readily available to the general public and has been deterred and discouraged from doing so. By benefiting from and/or maintaining a mobile website with barriers to effective communication, Defendant has deprived Plaintiff the equality of opportunity which it offers to the general public.

27. Plaintiff has suffered (and will continue to suffer) direct and indirect injury as a result of Defendant's violations until Defendant is compelled to comply with the requirements of the ADA and conform the mobile website to WCAG 2.1 Level A and AA Guidelines.

28. Plaintiff has a realistic, credible, existing, and continuing threat of discrimination from Defendant's non-compliance with the ADA with respect to its mobile website. Plaintiff has reasonable grounds to believe that he will continue to be subjected to discrimination in violation of the ADA by Defendant when he visits the mobile website to test for compliance with the ADA. Plaintiff desires to access the mobile website to avail himself of the benefits, advantages, goods and services therein, and/or to assure herself that the mobile website is in compliance with the ADA so that she and others similarly situated will have full and equal enjoyment of the mobile website without fear of discrimination.

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29. Plaintiff is without adequate remedy at law and has suffered (and will continue to suffer) irreparable harm. The Plaintiff will continue to suffer injury and damage without the immediate relief as requested herein.

30. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188, this Court is provided with authority to grant Plaintiff Injunctive Relief, including an order to require Defendant to alter the mobile website to make it readily accessible to and usable by Plaintiff (a visually impaired person).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, James Watson hereby demands judgment against Defendant, Restaurant People Beach Blvd, LLC., d/b/a S3, and requests the following injunctive and declaratory relief:

- a. The Court issue a Declaratory Judgment that determines that the mobile website is in violation of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act and 28 C.F.R. Section 36.303 *et seq.*;
- b. The Court issue a Declaratory Judgment that Defendant has violated the ADA by failing to monitor and maintain the mobile website which serves as a gateway to its restaurant to ensure that it is readily accessible to and usable by Plaintiff, a visually impaired person;
- c. The Court issue an Order directing Defendant to alter the mobile website to the full extent required by Title III of the ADA;
- d. The Court issue an Order directing Defendant provide the appropriate auxiliary aids such that Plaintiff (a visually impaired person) will be able to effectively communicate with the mobile website for purposes of comprehending “S3” restaurant menu selections, purchase a gift card, and make reservations to dine at Defendant’s, restaurant, and during that time period prior to the mobile website’s being designed to

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- permit Plaintiff to effectively communicate, requiring Defendant to provide an alternative method for Plaintiff to effectively communicate so that he is not impeded from obtaining the goods and services which Defendant has made available to the public through the mobile website.
- e. The Court enter an Order directing Defendant to evaluate and neutralize its policies and procedures towards Plaintiff (a visually impaired person) for such reasonable time so as to allow Defendant to undertake and complete corrective procedures;
 - f. The Court enter an Order directing Defendant to continually update and maintain the mobile website to ensure that it remains fully accessible and usable pursuant to Title III of the ADA;
 - g. The Court award attorney's fees, costs and litigation expenses pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12205; and
 - h. The Court provide such other relief as the Court deems just and proper, and/or is allowable under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Respectfully submitted this February 8, 2023.

By: /s/ J. Courtney Cunningham
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